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## SOME COYOTE STORIES FROM THE MAIDU INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA.<sup>1</sup>

(THE Coyote stories here given were collected as part of the work of the C. P. Huntington Expedition during the summer of 1899, among the "Koyoma" or Maidu of the higher Sierra in the vicinity of Genesee and Taylorsville, Plumas County, Cal. The Maidu, both of the Sierra and of the Sacramento Valley, have a large number of such stories in addition to others of a more serious nature, in which the Coyote acts as a marplot to the plans of Kodoyanpe, the Creator.)

### THE COYOTE AND THE GRIZZLY BEARS.

Long ago the Coyote and the Grizzly Bears had a falling out. There were two Bears who had a couple of small birds, called Pit-sititi. Whenever the Bears went down to the valley to get berries, they left these two birds at home. Once, while the Bears were away, the Coyote came to the Bears' camp, and asked the two little birds whether the Bears gave them enough to eat. Said the little birds, "No, they do not ; we are always hungry." The Coyote then asked whether there was any food in the camp, and the birds told him that there was, the Bears keeping a large supply on hand. Said the Coyote, "If you will show me the food, I will get up a fine dinner, and then we can all eat." The little birds agreed, and the Coyote prepared the food, and all had a great feast. When they were all through, the Coyote took up a small stick from the ground, thrust it into his nose to draw blood, and then with the blood marked a red stripe on the heads of the birds, and said, "When the Bears come back and ask you two who did this, say, 'The Coyote did it.' " Then the Coyote went off down the hill into the valley where the Bears were picking berries, and shouted from the side-hill, "Get out of there! That ground belongs to my grandmother." Then he went back up the hill to his own camp.

The two Bears came home, and when they saw the birds, asked them who had been there, and painted their heads with red. The two little birds answered that it was the Coyote. The Bears were very angry. They wanted to have their revenge, so they set out for the Coyote's camp. Before they reached it, however, the Coyote had made all his preparations to receive them. He let the fire go out, cluttered up the camp with filth, then lay down beside the fireplace, and blew the ashes up into the air, so that they settled

<sup>1</sup> Published by permission of the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

on him as he lay there, and made it appear as if he had not been out of the camp for a long time. He meant to deny everything that the two little birds had said, and claim to have been sick for a long while.

The Bears on their part had made plans also. Said one, "I will go in after him, while you stay by the smoke-hole outside, and catch him if he tries to escape by that way." They both carried sharp-pointed digging-sticks. The first Bear went into the hut, and found the Coyote lying by the fireplace, groaning. The Bear asked him what the trouble was, and the Coyote replied, "Oh, I'm sick." To this the Bear said, "I don't believe you. You have been down at my camp, and made trouble there." "No, I have n't," said the Coyote, "I've been sick up here for a long time." "But the birds said that you had been down at the camp, and had marked their heads with red, and eaten up all the food," replied the Bear. The Coyote, however, stoutly denied that he had been to the Bears' camp, and repeated the statement that he had been lying sick in his hut for a long time. "I've been here sick," he said, "and have heard the children playing round outside, but no one has come in to see how I was." At this moment the Bear made a thrust at the Coyote with the sharp stick. The Coyote dodged, crying, as he did so, "Whee." The Bear struck again, but this time the Coyote jumped up through the smoke-hole, and escaped. The other Bear, who was stationed at the smoke-hole, struck at the Coyote as he passed, but missed him.

As soon as he was clear of the hut, the Coyote ran to a big log, where he had hidden his bow and arrows. The Bears followed as fast as they could, crying, "Hurry up, there, hurry up! We'll catch him, and make a quiver out of his skin." The Coyote jumped over the log to where his bow was, and got it and his arrows all ready. He waited for the Bears to jump up on the log. The one that had been at the smoke-hole reached the log first, jumped up on it, and was shot by the Coyote at once. The other Bear came next, and was likewise shot by the Coyote. When he had killed both the Bears, he came out from behind the log, and said, "All people can call me Coyote."

#### COYOTE AND THE FLEAS.

The Coyote was walking along a road one day, and came to where a Mole was working. He stood and watched the Mole for a while, then stuck his foot down in front of the Mole, and kicked him out of the ground, saying "Hello, Cousin." The Mole had a little sack that he was carrying, and the Coyote, thinking that it contained tobacco, said, "Here, give me a smoke." The Mole replied, "No,

I have no tobacco." The Coyote answered, "Why, yes, you have; you have some in that little sack." The Mole repeated that he had no tobacco, that there was none in the sack. "Let me look in the sack," said the Coyote. "No, you can't look at it," said the Mole. "Well, then, if you won't let me, I will take it away from you," and the Coyote grabbed the sack, and took it away. He opened it, and found that it was full of fleas. They jumped all over him, and began to bite him. The Coyote cried out, "Take it back, Cousin, take it back," but the Mole had run to his hole, and disappeared. The Coyote was left to howl alone. After a while he looked around, and said, "People can call me Coyote."

#### COYOTE AND THE GRAY FOX.

The Coyote was going up over a hill into a valley that lay on the far side, when he saw a Gray Fox coming down the valley along the foothills. The Fox kept crying out, as he thought that the Coyote would not come into the valley while he was there. The Coyote said to himself, "What can he be crying out so loudly for?" In order to see what was the trouble, the Coyote trotted down the hill towards the Fox, and coming within a hundred yards of the Fox, said, "I'll bet that is my cousin." He caught up with the Fox, and asked what had been the cause of his crying and hallooing so loudly. The Fox answered that he had been gambling, and had lost his hide, which the winner had taken to make a quiver of. (This was a lie, but the Fox knew that the Coyote always believed everything he was told.) The Coyote said, "How do you fellows take your skin off in that way?" "I cannot tell you how it is done," said the Fox, "but I could show you if I only had some one to work on." "Does it hurt much?" asked the Coyote. "Oh, no, not generally; if it does, however, you have to keep perfectly still," replied the Fox. "Well, if it does not hurt much, you had better try it on me; I want to see how it feels." Now this was just what the Fox wanted, so he said, "All right, lie down here, and I'll see if I can do it for you." Pretty soon the Fox had all the Coyote's hide stripped off, except the tip of his nose; when he got this far, he just broke the end of the nose off, thus killing the Coyote. Then the Fox laughed and shook the skin, saying, "I'll make me a Coyote-quiver for my arrows out of this," and went off, leaving the Coyote lying there. By and by the Buzzard came along, and picked out the Coyote's eyes. While he was eating them, the Coyote came to life, jumped up, and cried, "Who is that that is digging my eyes out?" But his eyes were both gone, and he could not see anything. He crawled about in despair, but soon came to a pine-tree where he found a lot of gum. He took two pieces of this, stuck them in his eye-sockets, and made

a pair of eyes of them. When he had done this, he found that he had lost his tail. So he picked up a bit of a branch that was lying on the ground near by, and stuck it on for a tail. As he went off, he said, "People can call me Coyote."

#### HOW THE COYOTE MARRIED HIS DAUGHTER.

One of the Coyote's daughters was a very beautiful girl. The Coyote was very fond of her, and was always scheming as to how he might succeed in marrying her. One day a plan occurred to him. He made believe that he was sick, and lay there, groaning. He told his family that he was going to die, and instructed them to prepare a scaffold three or four feet high of boughs, etc., to burn his body on. The Coyote's wife and daughters prepared everything according to directions, and gathered a great quantity of sage-brush to put under the scaffold when the time came to burn the body. The Coyote told them that when they had once started the fire, they were to go away at once, and not look back. Soon after telling them this, the Coyote made believe he was dead. His family carried out his orders, and having lit the fire under his body, went away, crying. As soon as they were gone, the Coyote jumped down from the scaffold, and went off. Two or three days after he came back, and meeting his daughter, made love to her. After a while he married her. A week or two after they were married, the old woman who had been the Coyote's wife before suspected that there was something wrong. She suspected that the man who had married her daughter was really her own husband whom they had thought dead. One day, when the Coyote had gone out hunting, the old woman said to her daughter, "I think that you have married your father." The old woman knew that the Coyote had a scar on the back of his head, which was due to an old wound. So she told her daughter to try to get her husband to let her hunt for lice on his head, when she would have an opportunity to see if he had a scar. After several days the young girl succeeded in getting her husband to let her hunt for lice on his head, and in a minute she found the scar. She said, "Now I have found you out ; you are my father." The Coyote jumped up and laughed till his sides ached, then he said, "People can call me Coyote."

*Roland B. Dixon.*